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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Vitamin D - A Must for Children

A conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Tuesday, January 18, 1938.

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MR. KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington--speaking to you from the studio in the Department of Agriculture Building. First thing on the docket is the Household Calendar. We're accustomed to having Ruth Van Deman's report from the Bureau of Home Economics on Thursday. But Miss Van Deman is here a little earlier in the week than usual. And she tells me that she is going to follow a suggestion that came from a homemaker living on Lake Superior, in Wisconsin. But, Ruth, I don't want to steal any of your thunder ...

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Not at all, Mr. Kadderly. I wish you'd read her letter.

MR. KADDERLY:

Aloud?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, please.

MR. KADDERLY:

"Dear Miss Van Deman: I listen to your reports and enjoy them ..."

MISS VAN DEMAN:

No, no. Farther down - the part about food budgets and gray days.

MR. KADDERLY:

"My husband is a dentist and our family is one boy 13 and one girl 9. Do you have any material that might help me in working out a food budget?" (Of course you're sending her "Diets to Fit the Family Income"?)

MISS VAN DEMAN:

(Yes, of course.) And now that last part -

MR. KADDERLY:

"We need in our part of the country to furnish the diet with plenty of the proper foods to substitute for our lack of sunshine. We're on the lake and have a great many gray days."

MISS VAN DEMAN:

I shouldn't wonder if her husband had been telling her about that Public Health survey on children's teeth.

MR. KADDERLY:

Don't believe I know about that.

(over)

MISS VAN DEMAN:

It takes a while for the news of these things to get around. It covered nearly a million and a half children in 26 States.

MR. KADDERLY:

Quite a sample.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

They did their best to make it representative. Anyway eight thousand dentists helped examine the children.

MR. KADDERLY:

How old? the children I mean.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Elementary school age, and about as many boys as girls. One of the most striking things was about the youngsters 12 to 14. About three-fourths in that group in the Northern States had cavities in their teeth.

MR. KADDERLY:

You mean just one-fourth, twenty-five percent, of those young boys and girls had perfectly sound teeth?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

That's right. Only twenty-four percent to be exact. And Wisconsin was one of the States where the average was more than three cavities per child.

MR. KADDERLY:

Not so good.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Not so very.

MR. KADDERLY:

How about the West Coast?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

As I remember it, the survey didn't cover Washington State. But in Oregon the average was between two and three cavities for each child. In California it was only one to two. Of course you must remember that not the same number of children were studied in each State. That may explain some of the differences.

MR. KADDERLY:

Yes, of course.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

But taking Arizona in the Southwest and the other States south of the Mason and Dixon line, they showed up better. There 60 as against 76 percent of the 12 to 14 year olds had evidences of decay in their teeth.

MR. KADDERLY:

How do you explain that?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

The sunny South seems to explain it, partly at least.

MR. KADDERLY:

More sunny weather?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, more sunny days and more hours of sunlight in a day. More chance for ultra-violet rays to shine on the skin ...

MR. KADDERLY:

And the more ultra-violet rays the more vitamin D underneath the skin.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, sir. That's the cycle. And as our listener in Wisconsin suggests, if children can't get their vitamin D from sunlight, then they need to get it from food.

MR. KADDERLY:

Then you'd call vitamin D a must for children?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Definitely. Vitamin D plus plenty of calcium and phosphorus.

MR. KADDERLY:

The three together.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, as the nutritionists put it, the vitamin D helps to deposit the calcium and mobilize the phosphorus.

MR. KADDERLY:

And if a child doesn't get all these things in his food?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

If he's a baby, he's likely to have rickets. His teeth won't get the right start. If he's older, he'll probably begin to have cavities in his teeth. He simply doesn't have the right materials to build the bony parts of the body.

MR. KADDERLY:

Ruth, have the nutritionists got to the point yet where they can say how many units of vitamin D a youngster needs a day?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Well, you know there are different systems of units for measuring vitamins.

MR. KADDERLY:

Yes. I understand the units aren't all standardized yet.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Not yet. But, fortunately, more and more vitamin values are being given in terms of International units. In terms of them, child specialists generally recommend 700 to 800 units of vitamin D a day for babies more than three months old.

MR. KADDERLY:

And for older children?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

It's harder to say for them. Until they're six or seven years old, they may need as much vitamin D as that, especially in wintertime. The doctor and the dentist who see them regularly can tell best about that.

MR. KADDERLY:

Excuse me if I seem to be persistent - with these questions. What's that 700 or 800 units equivalent to in cod-liver oil, say?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

About two teaspoons of an oil that measures up to the U. S. standard.

MR. KADDERLY:

U. S. standard under the provisions of the Food and Drug Act.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

That's right.

MR. KADDERLY:

Yes, I remember Mr. Campbell spoke of that the other day.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Wallace, your question about the cod-liver reminds me of a verse I saw in the Journal of the American Medical Association, called "Lament of a General Practitioner." It ran like this -

"It fills me with profound dismay
To see that nearly every day
They find some newer vitamin
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.
It's really much too great a strain
For any normal adult brain
To catalogue each in its place.
So now, when rickets shows its face
And starts to mar the work of God,
I turn back to the lowly cod
And use his oil, and man alive
You ought to see those kiddies thrive."

MR. KADDERLY:

I'm glad to know that the doctors have a time keeping up on these vitamins - that makes me feel a bit better.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Oh, yes, everybody does. New facts are coming out of the laboratories all the time. Vitamins are a growing science.

MR. KADDERLY:

Well, on the science of growing, I think your bureau has a very fine bulletin about children's diet.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

You mean the Farmers' Bulletin, "Food for Children?"

MR. KADDERLY:

That's the one - Food for Children.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, it tells the food children need and why.

MR. KADDERLY:

And gives some menus, if I remember right.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

And a few recipes, yes.

MR. KADDERLY:

In other words a good reference book for a homemaker like your friend in Wisconsin who wants to be sure her youngsters are fed right.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, there's a check list of the foods a child needs every day.

MR. KADDERLY:

Let's run through that. It won't take but a minute.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

All right. Milk comes first of course. At least a pint of milk every day. Or a quart if possible.

MR. KADDERLY:

And butter ...

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Butter at every meal.

MR. KADDERLY:

Cereal, bread, or potato ...

MISS VAN DEMAN:

At every meal.

MR. KADDERLY:

Vegetables, in addition to potato ...

MISS VAN DEMAN:

At least two kinds of vegetables every day. The green leafy ones often, and some raw ones now and then.

MR. KADDERLY:

Fruit ...

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Fruit - at least once a day. Twice if possible. And every day oranges, or grapefruit, or tomato juice, or some raw fruit.

MR. KADDERLY:

Ah, for the vitamin C.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

You certainly don't miss a trick on vitamin C.

MR. KADDERLY:

Oh, I'm learning a thing or two about these vitamins. But back to our check list - egg or meat. Any harm in both?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Very good for an older child. He needs both every day for body building.

MR. KADDERLY:

And last, sweets?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Just where they belong - at the end of a meal, and not too many of them. Sweets furnish energy but nothing else. A youngster needs building foods first. Then just enough sweet to top off with.

MR. KADDERLY:

Well, thank you, Ruth, for this interesting report on vitamin D and children's diet.

I'll repeat the title of that bulletin on children's diet. The exact title is Food for Children. It can be had without cost by sending a card to the Bureau of Home Economics, Washington, D. C. Just ask for the bulletin on Food for Children.

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